

CLAIMS

We Claim:

1. A method for configuring a database system to store information regarding a plurality of items, said method comprising:

5 establishing a database on a computer system;

establishing within said database a first object corresponding to a first item of the plurality of items;

generating within said first object at least one field;

associating a field identifier with each said field; and

10 storing at least a portion of the information within each said field.

2. The method of claim 1 comprising, for the plurality of items:

defining at least one attribute of the plurality of items;

creating a field identifier corresponding to each defined attribute of the plurality of items, said field identifiers comprising a set of field identifiers; and

wherein said step of generating comprises:

obtaining item information regarding said first item;

dividing the item information into at least one category, wherein each said category corresponds to a field identifier; and

generating within said first object a field corresponding to each said category.

3. The method of claim 2 wherein said step of associating comprises, for each said field:

selecting from said set of field identifiers said field identifier that corresponds to the same defined attribute of the plurality of items that said field corresponds to;

25 and

associating said selected field identifier with said field.

4. The method of claim 3 wherein each said field identifier is unique.

5. The method of claim 4 wherein each said field identifier includes a numeric code.

30 6. The method of claim 2 wherein each defined attribute of the plurality of items describes a trait of the plurality of items and each defined attribute of the item describes a trait of the item.

7. The method of claim 2 wherein said step of defining at least one attribute of the plurality of items comprises:

obtaining information regarding the plurality of items;

dividing the information regarding the plurality of items into at least one category; and

defining an attribute of the plurality of items that describes the information in each category.

8. The method of claim 7 wherein the information regarding the plurality of items is obtained from an analysis of the plurality of items.

9. The method of claim 2 wherein the item information is obtained from an analysis of the plurality of items.

10. The method of claim 2 wherein said step of storing comprises, for each said field, storing in said field the item information in the category corresponding to said field.

11. The method of claim 1 wherein said field is identifiable and retrievable from said database by way of said field identifier.

12. The method of claim 1 wherein each said field identifier is unique.

13. The method of claim 1 wherein the first item comprises one of a first product and a first service, and said at least a portion of the information within each said field comprises information regarding one of said first product and said first service.

14. The method of claim 1 wherein said database is a relational database.

15. The method of claim 1, comprising associating each object with an object identifier.

16. The method of claim 16 wherein each said object identifier is unique.

17. The method of claim 16 wherein each said object identifier comprises a user name and password.

18. The method of claim 15 wherein said object is identifiable and retrievable from said database by way of said object identifier.

19. A method for configuring a database system to store information regarding a plurality of items comprising:

for each item in the plurality of items, defining at least one attribute of the

plurality of items;

creating a field identifier corresponding to each defined attribute of the plurality of items, said field identifiers comprising a set of field identifiers;

establishing a database on a computer system;

5 establishing within said database a first object corresponding to a first item of the plurality of items;

obtaining item information regarding said first item;

dividing the item information into at least one category, wherein each said category corresponds to a field identifier;

10 generating within said first object a field corresponding to each said category;

selecting from said set of field identifiers said field identifier that corresponds to the same defined attribute of the plurality of items that said field corresponds to;

associating said selected field identifier with said field; and

15 for each said field, storing in said field the item information in the category corresponding to said field.

20. A database system configured to store information regarding a plurality of items, each item in the plurality of items having at least one item attribute, comprising:

20 a computer having memory;

a database stored in said memory;

a first object in said database corresponding to one item of the plurality of items, said first object corresponding to the first item;

at least one field in said first object;

25 a field identifier associated with each said field; and

information regarding said first item stored in said first object.

21. The database system of claim 20 wherein the plurality of items have a predetermined set of attributes, and wherein:

30 said computer system includes a predetermined list of field identifiers, each said field identifier in said predetermined list corresponding to one of the predetermined set of attributes; and

said at least one field comprises one field corresponding to each attribute in

the predetermined set of attributes for which information is known regarding said first item.

22. The database system of claim 21 wherein said at least one field comprises one field corresponding to each attribute in the predetermined set of attributes that is also an item attribute of the first item.

5 23. The database system of claim 22 wherein each said field identifier associated with each said field comprises the field identifier corresponding to the attribute in the predetermined set of attributes to which said field corresponds.

10 24. The database system of claim 23 wherein each said field identifier associated with each said field comprises an identifier unique to the attribute in the predetermined set of attributes to which said field identifier corresponds.

15 25. The database system of claim 24 wherein each said field identifier associated with each said field comprises a unique field identifier.

26. The database system of claim 25 wherein each said field identifier associated with each said field comprises a numeric code.

27. The database system of claim 21 wherein each attribute of the predetermined set of attributes comprises a trait of the plurality of items and each attribute of each item in the plurality of items comprises a trait of that item.

20 28. The database system of claim 21 wherein the information regarding said first item stored in said first object comprises information regarding said first item stored in each field of said first object.

29. The database system of claim 28 wherein the information stored in each said field of said first object corresponds to the same attribute of the first item to which said field corresponds.

25 30. The database system of claim 20 wherein said database is adapted to categorize the information regarding each item into categories wherein the information in each category describes an attribute of the item, and define the attribute described by the information in each category.

30 31. The database system of claim 20 wherein each said at least one field in said first object is identifiable and retrievable from said database by way of said field identifier associated with said field.

32. The database system of claim 20 wherein the information regarding a

plurality of items comprises information regarding a plurality of products, services, or product and services.

33. The database system of claim 20 wherein said database comprises a relational database.

5 34. The database system of claim 20, comprising an object identifier associated with said first object.

35. The database system of claim 34 wherein each said object identifier comprises a unique identifier.

10 36. The database system of claim 34 wherein each said object identifier comprises a user name and password.

37. The database system of claim 34 wherein said first object is identifiable and retrievable from said database by way of said object identifier.

38. A method for configuring a database system to store a plurality of lists containing information regarding a plurality of items comprising:

15 establishing a list database on a server computer system, said list database including a first list associated with a first list identifier;

establishing a management tool on a client computer system, remote from said server computer system, said management tool including said list identifier;

20 establishing a communications link between said client computer system and said server computer system;

retrieving said first list from said list database to said management tool responsive to said first list identifier;

revising said retrieved first list; and

25 updating said first list in said list database to reflect the revision to said retrieved first list.

39. The method of claim 38 wherein said step of establishing a list database comprises:

establishing within said list database a first list object corresponding to said first list;

30 generating within said first list object a first list field;

associating a first list identifier with said first list object;

wherein said step of retrieving comprises retrieving said first list object from

said list database;

wherein said step of revising comprises storing in said first list field of said retrieved first list object information regarding one of the plurality of items, said one of the plurality of items being the first item; and

5 wherein said step of updating comprises updating said first list object in said list database to reflect the revision to said retrieved first list object.

40. The method of claim 39 wherein said step of generating comprises associating a first list field identifier with said first list field, said first list field identifier corresponding to the information stored in said first list field.

10 41. The method of claim 40 wherein said step of revising comprises storing in said first list field information corresponding to said first list field identifier.

42. The method of claim 39 wherein said step of associating comprises: generating said first list identifier; and associating said first list identifier with said first list object.

15 43. The method of claim 42 wherein said first list identifier is unique.

44. The method of claim 43 wherein said first list identifier includes a user name and password generated by a user of said list database.

20 45. The method of claim 39 wherein said step of revising comprises: establishing an item database on said server computer system, said item database including stored information relating to said first item; and creating a pointer in said first list field referencing said information relating to said first item stored in said item database.

25 46. The method of claim 39 wherein said step of revising comprises: establishing an item database on said server computer system, said item database including stored information relating to said first item; and creating a copy in said first list field of said information relating to said first item stored in said item database.

30 47. The method of claim 39 wherein said step of revising comprises, responsive to a command issued to said management tool, identifying said first list field and revising said first list field to remove said stored information regarding said first item from said first list field.

48. The method of claim 49 wherein said step of revising comprises the

steps of:

establishing an item database on said server computer system, said item database including first item information relating to a first item; and

- 5 responsive to a command issued by said management tool, revising said first list field to include a pointer referencing said first item.

49. The method of claim 48, comprising:

retrieving said first item information from said item database to said management tool; and

- 10 displaying a graphical representation of said first item information on a user interface of said management tool.

50. The method of claim 39 wherein said step of revising comprises:

capturing information relating to a first provided item; and

revising said first list field to include a pointer referencing said first provided item.

- 15 51. The method of claim 50 wherein said step of capturing comprises the steps of:

establishing a communications link between said client computer system and an item provider computer system, said item provider computer system remote from said client computer system and including information relating to a first provided item; and

20 responsive to a command issued to said management tool, locating said first provided item on said item provider computer system, and

capturing said information relating to said first provided item.

52. The method of claim 51 wherein said step of capturing comprises the

- 25 steps of:

providing a template database on a template database server computer system remote from said client computer system, said template database including one or more templates, each corresponding to an information structure;

determining a structure for said information relating to said first provided

- 30 item;

retrieving a template corresponding to said structure from said template database to said management tool;

applying said template to said provided item information to parse said information relating to said first provided item; and

capturing said parsed information with said management tool.

5 53. The method of claim 50 wherein said step of revising comprises:

establishing an item database on said server computer system, said item database storing information relating to a plurality of items;

comparing said captured information relating to said first provided item with said information stored in said item database relating to the plurality of items;

10 responsive to a pre-established rule, revising said information stored in said item database relating to the plurality of items to include said information relating to said first provided item; and

wherein said step of revising comprises revising said first list field to include a pointer referencing said information relating to first provided item in said item database.

15 54. The method of claim 53 wherein said step of responsive to a pre-established rule, revising said information stored in said item database relating to the plurality of items comprises:

determining if said information stored in said item database relating to the plurality of items includes said captured information relating to said first provided item; and

revising said information stored in said item database relating to the plurality of items to include said captured information relating to said first provided item if said information stored in said item database relating to the plurality of items does not include said captured information relating to said first provided item.

25 55. The method of claim 39 wherein said step of revising comprises:

providing information relating to a first provided item to said management tool;

establishing an item database on said server computer system, said item database storing information relating to a plurality of items;

30 revising said information stored in said item database relating to the plurality of items to include said information relating to said first provided item; and

wherein said step of revising comprises revising said first list field to include

a pointer referencing said information relating to said first provided item in said item database.

5. 56. The method of claim 39 wherein said first list field stores information regarding a first item, and comprising, responsive to a command issued by said management tool:

establishing a communications link between said client computer system and an item provider computer system, said item provider computer system remote from said client computer system and offering said first item for sale; and

10 facilitating the purchase of said first item from said item provider computer system.

15 57. The method of claim 56 wherein said step of revising comprises the step of:

15 capturing purchase information relating to the purchase of said first item; and
15 updating said first list in said list database to reflect the inclusion of said purchase information in said retrieved first list.

20 58. The method of claim 57 wherein said purchase information comprises information relating to one or more of: price, quantity, shipping method, and delivery date.

25 59. The method of claim 39 wherein said step of establishing a communications link between said client computer system and said server computer system comprises establishing a communications link using one or more of the Internet, a wide area network, and a local area network.

25 60. The method of claim 59 wherein said step of establishing a communications link between said client computer system and said list database server computer system comprises the steps of:

providing a browser tool on said client computer system;
instructing said browser tool to locate said item provider computer system;
and

30 instructing said browser tool to search said item provider computer system for said provided item information.

61. The method of claim 39, comprising:

establishing an item database on said server computer system;

establishing within said item database a first item object corresponding to the first item;

generating within said first item object at least one item field;

associating an item field identifier with each said item field; and

5 storing at least a portion of the information regarding the first item within each said item field.

62. The method of claim 61 wherein said step of revising comprises storing in said first list field of said retrieved first list object a pointer referencing said first item object.

10 63. The method of claim 39, comprising:

establishing an item database on said server computer system, said item database storing information relating to the plurality of items;

capturing information regarding a first provided item and information regarding a provider of said first provided item;

15 comparing said captured information with said information stored in said item database relating to the plurality of items to determine if said captured information is included in said information stored in said item database; and

revising said item database to any captured information not included in said information stored in said item database.

20 64. The method of claim 63 wherein said step of revising comprises:

establishing within said item database a first item object corresponding said first provided item;

generating within said first item object at least one item field;

associating an item field identifier with each said item field; and

25 storing a portion of the information regarding the first provided item within each said item field.

65. The method of claim 63 wherein said step of revising comprises:

establishing within said item database a first provider object corresponding to said item provider;

30 generating within said first provider object at least one item field;

associating a provider field identifier with each said provider field; and

storing a portion of the information regarding the item provider within each

said provider field.

66. The method of claim 65 wherein said item database includes a first item object, comprising associating said provider object with said first item object.

67. The method of claim 64 wherein said step of revising comprises
5 storing in said first list field of said retrieved first list object a pointer referencing said first item object.

68. The method of claim 38 wherein said first list includes a first item and
wherein said step of revising comprises the step of, responsive to a command
issued to said management tool, identifying said first item and revising said
10 retrieved first list to remove said first item from said retrieved list.

69. The method of claim 38 wherein said step of revising comprises the
steps of:

15 establishing an item database on an item database server computer system
remote from said client computer system, said item database including item
information relating to a first item;

responsive to a command issued by said management tool, retrieving said
item information from said item database to said management tool; and

responsive to a command issued by said management tool, capturing said
item information relating to said first item, and

20 revising said retrieved first list to include said item information relating to said
first item.

70. The method of claim 38 wherein said step of revising comprises the
steps of:

25 establishing a communications link between said client computer system and
an item provider computer system, said item provider computer system remote
from said client computer system and including information relating to a first
provided item;

responsive to a command issued to said client computer system, locating
said first provided item on said item provider computer system;

30 capturing said information relating to said first provided item with said
management tool; and

responsive to a command issued by said management tool, revising said

retrieved first list to include said information relating to said first provided item.

71. The method of claim 70 wherein said step of capturing comprises the steps of:

5 providing a template database on a template database server computer system remote from said client computer system, said template database including one or more templates, each corresponding to an information structure;

determining a structure for said information relating to said first provided item;

10 retrieving a template corresponding to said structure from said template database to said management tool;

applying said template to said provided item information to parse said information relating to said first provided item; and

capturing said parsed information with said management tool.

72. The method of claim 70 wherein said step of revising said retrieved first list comprises the steps of:

15 establishing an item database on an item database server computer system remote from said client computer system, said item database including stored information relating to a first item;

20 comparing said information relating to said first provided item with said stored information relating to said first item;

responsive to a pre-established rule, revising said stored information relating to said first item to include said information relating to said first provided item; and

responsive to a command issued to said management tool, revising said retrieved first list to include said information relating to said first provided item.

25 73. The method of claim 72 wherein said step of responsive to a pre-established rule, revising said information relating to said first item comprises the steps of:

determining if said information relating to said first provided item and said information relating to said first item relate to the same item; and

30 revising said information relating to said first item to include said information relating to said first provided item if said information relating to said first item relates to the same item as said information relating to said first provided item.

74. The method of claim 38 wherein said step of revising comprises the steps of:

providing information relating to a first provided item to said management tool; and

5 responsive to a command issued to said management tool, revising said retrieved first list to include said information relating to said first provided item.

75. The method of claim 38 wherein said retrieved first list includes a first item, comprising the steps of, responsive to a command issued by said management tool:

10 establishing a communications link between said client computer system and an item provider computer system, said item provider computer system remote from said client computer system and offering said first item for sale; and

purchasing said first item from said item provider computer system.

76. The method of claim 75 wherein said step of revising comprises the 15 step of:

capturing purchase information relating to said purchase of said first item; and

updating said first list in said list database to reflect the inclusion of said purchase information in said retrieved first list.

20 77. The method of claim 76 wherein said purchase information comprises information relating to one or more of: price, quantity, shipping method, and delivery date.

25 78. The method of claim 38 wherein said step of establishing a communications link between said client computer system and said list database server computer system comprises establishing a communications link using one or more of the Internet, a wide area network, and a local area network.

79. The method of claim 78 wherein said step of establishing a 30 communications link between said client computer system and said list database server computer system comprises the steps of:

providing a browser tool on said client computer system;

instructing said browser tool to locate said item provider computer system;

and

instructing said browser tool to search said item provider computer system for said provided item information.

80. A method for creating an electronic list of items, said method comprising the steps of:

- 5 establishing a list database on a server computer system;
- establishing a management tool on a client computer system remote from said server computer system, said management tool including a list identifier;
- establishing a communications link between said server computer system and said client computer system;
- 10 responsive to a signal issued by said client computer, establishing a communications link to an item provider computer system remote from both said server computer system and said client computer system;
- locating an item on the item provider computer system; and
- responsive to a command issued to said management tool, adding a pointer referencing said item to a list associated with said list identifier in said list database on said server computer system.

81. A method for maintaining an electronic list, said method comprising the steps of:

- 20 establishing a management tool on a client computer system, said management tool including a list identifier;
- establishing on a server computer system remote from said client computer system: an item database including item information relating to a first item, and a list database including a list associated with said list identifier, said list including said first item;
- 25 establishing a communications link to an item provider computer system remote from both said server computer system and said client computer system;
- responsive to a command from said server computer system, updating said item information in said item database; and
- responsive to a command issued to said client computer system and said list identifier, retrieving to said client computer system said updated information corresponding to an item on said list associated with said list identifier.

82. A method for maintaining an electronic shopping list on a computer

system linked to a network, said shopping list including at least one record, each said record containing information relating to a product, said method comprising the steps of:

5 establishing a shopping list management toolbar on an Internet browser on a client computer system, said client computer system in communication with the Internet;

establishing on a server computer system in communication with the Internet, a shopping list database, said shopping list database including a first shopping list having a shopping list identifier;

10 providing said shopping list identifier to said shopping list management toolbar;

communicating said shopping list identifier to said shopping list database;

retrieving a copy of said first shopping list from said shopping list database to said shopping list management toolbar responsive to said shopping list identifier;

15 establishing communications via the Internet with a product provider computer system, said product database including product information relating to a first product;

revising said retrieved copy of said first shopping list on said shopping list management toolbar to include a pointer referencing said product information relating to said first product; and

20 updating said first shopping list in said shopping list database to reflect the revisions to said retrieved shopping list.